

SMALL GAME HUNTING

ON FORT DRUM



FISH & WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

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NATURAL RESOURCES BRANCH

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FORT DRUM REGULATIONS

Small game hunting regulations are established by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC). Fort Drum is Wildlife Management Unit 6H.

Hunters must also abide by *Fort Drum Regulation 420-3*, which includes all regulations regarding hunting, fishing, trapping, camping and other outdoor activities on Fort Drum.

All individuals small game hunting or participating in other outdoor recreational activities on the installation must obtain a Fort Drum Recreation Permit and Access Pass from the Natural Resources Permit Office (S-2509).

For more information, see the Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management web site at

www.drum.army.mil/garrison/pw/fishandwild.html.

Questions regarding regulations or fish and wildlife issues can be directed to Fort Drum's Fish and Wildlife Management Program at 315-772-9636 or 772-4999.

ABOUT THE MAP

Fort Drum has huntable populations of all game species in this brochure, and hunters are likely to find wide distributions of animals throughout the installation.

The map in this brochure does not represent the only areas to hunt small game on Fort Drum, nor is it inclusive of all the habitat available to hunt. This map merely identifies some of the more dominant stands of preferred habitat for many of the species of small game.

As our efforts continue, additional areas will be identified on future maps. A larger map is available to view at the Natural Resources Permit Office (S-2509). For habitat descriptions, please see the "Habitat and Food" section for each species.

Photo credits: Turkey cover photo by SPC Mark Nettles, 27th PAD; images of wings and tail feathers used with permission from The Wildlife Society; all other photos by Eric Dresser (North Bay Nature Photography).

RING-NECKED PHEASANT

Phasianus colchicus



The ring-necked pheasant is a bird native to Asia, but has been released in the U.S. as a game bird since the late 1800's. New York had its first hunting season for pheasants in 1908.

Weights for these birds are typically 2-2 ½ lbs.

Habitat and Food: Harsh climate and lack of suitable habitat does not allow for self-sustaining pheasant populations in northern New York.

Pheasants are sometimes stocked on Fort Drum for a put-and-take hunting opportunity in Training Area 12. Released birds on Fort Drum can be seen in many color variations and both sexes can be harvested. The general location where pheasants are released is on the map.

EASTERN GRAY SQUIRREL

Sciurus carolinensis



The gray squirrel is most commonly seen as a resident in city and suburban parks where it has thrived due to the planting of oak and other hardwood trees, however these animals are abundant in most

areas that have good mast crops. Despite the common name, gray squirrels can sometimes be black in color. Gray squirrels weigh around ¾-1½ lbs.

Habitat and Food: The gray squirrel is dependent on trees and will rarely be found far from them. They will be found primarily in upland hardwood forests where foods of choice are nuts, seeds, berries and fungi, but they can also be found in wooded river bottoms. Look for mixed hardwoods that provide soft mast (maple and cherry) and hard mast (beech, oak, hickory).

WILD TURKEY

Meleagris gallopavo



Male turkey or tom.

The wild turkey is North America's largest game bird. Males—called toms, gobblers and jakes (for young males)—can often be distinguished by their mostly bald, bluish and red head; red throat and typically bare neck; and large bulbous caruncles. Additionally toms have dark, iridescent plumage, prominent spurs

on their legs, and a well-developed 'beard' (modified feather structure), protruding from their chest. Males get their nickname from the unmistakable 'gobble' call they make to attract females during mating season, typically April-May.

Females—called hens or jennys (for young females)—have a bluish-gray head with a feathered neck. They typically have a more brown, duller appearance than males, which allows them to remain concealed when nesting. Hens may also have a beard.

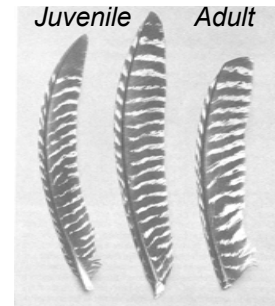
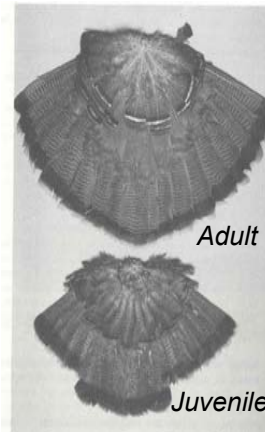
Weights average 18-20 lbs. in males and 9-12 lbs. in females.

To tell the age of the bird you harvest, look at the tail fan. Until about 1 ½ years, young turkeys will have the three central tail feathers extending past the rest; tail fans in older birds will be more evenly rounded on the outside edge. Another characteristic between young and old birds is the outermost barred wing feather. On a young turkey this feather will be sharply pointed and dark-tipped, while in older birds, the feather will be rounded and white tipped.

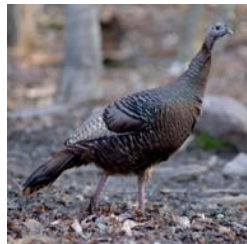
Habitat and Food: Clearing of forests for farmland in the 1800s led to the dramatic decline of the native wild turkey in New York; most were gone by 1844. In the 1940s, small numbers of turkeys began moving

northward from Pennsylvania into southwestern New York, and in 1957 NYSDEC officials began relocating turkeys to other parts of the state to be re-introduced.

Since being re-established in New York, the turkey has adapted to numerous different habitats ranging from farmlands to oak forests. In the spring and summer, adult turkeys feed on a wide variety of plants and insects, while in the fall they typically feed on beechnuts, acorns and other hard masts. Turkeys can be found throughout Fort Drum. In the spring, focus hunting efforts on field edges next to mixed forests; in the fall look for hard mast producing trees, like oaks.



Wing feathers (above) adult center and right. Tail fans (left).



Female turkey or hen.

RUFFED GROUSE



Bonasa umbellus

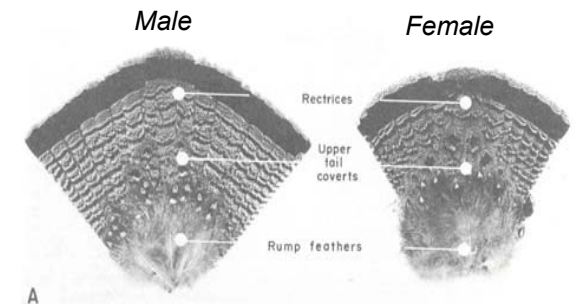
The ruffed grouse is often heard before it is seen, taking off rapidly with a loud fluttering noise, startling anyone who walks near. Males can be heard throughout the year when they are beating their wings (called drumming), trying to attract females and establish a territory. Drumming sounds something like a lawn mower starting off in the distance; females do not make this sound. Weights for these birds are typically 1-1 ¼ lbs.

Although similar in appearance, the sexes can usually be differentiated from one another by the length of the central tail feather. In males, that length will usually exceed 6 inches (about the length of a dollar bill), while in females it will be less.

Additionally, the number of spots on the rump feathers is a very good indicator of sex in mature birds—females have only one; males have two or three spots.

Habitat and Food: Grouse are typically associated with young quaking aspen stands where they forage on aspen buds, their favorite food. Grouse will also readily use mixed-aged hardwood and conifer forests for foraging and cover in the wintertime, eating the buds of beech, cedar and hemlock trees, and roosting in patches of spruce and hemlock. During the spring and summer, grasses, herbaceous leaves, berries and insects dominate their diet.

For the best places to find ruffed grouse on Fort Drum look for dominant and mixed stands of small to medium-size aspen early in the season. As the season progresses, focus more on mixed stands of aspen with good conifer cover nearby or throughout.



Tail fans showing the central tail feathers (rectrices) in the male (left) and female (right).

SNOWSHOE HARE

Lepus americanus

The snowshoe hare was given its common name because of the large, furred hind feet that act like snowshoes and keep the animal on top of the snow. Brown in summer, hares turn white



(except for black ear tips) in winter. This color change allows the animal more concealment from predators during the snowy winter months and gives rise to another name for the animal, 'varying hare.'

Cottontail rabbits appear

similar to the snowshoe hare in the summer with a rusty nape, but cottontails lack the large hind feet, have smaller ears, and remain brown in the winter.

Snowshoe hares are 15-20 inches long and typically weigh 3-5 lbs.



Snowshoe Hare tracks

Habitat and Food: Hares prefer heavily forested areas with a dense under story. They will be found primarily in coniferous and mixed woods, but can also be found in cedar swamps and spruce bogs. Summer foods include grasses, clovers, ferns and strawberries. Winter foods include bark, twigs and buds from maple, willow and aspen trees. Hares will frequent clear-cut areas where leftover tops and stems are near the ground within easy reach. An easy way to find the hare during the winter time is to walk in the woods until you come across the distinct tracks; showing the large hind feet ahead of the front feet. Thick cover with a good conifer component is typically a good place to find hares on Fort Drum.

EASTERN COTTONTAIL RABBIT

Sylvilagus floridanus



This rabbit has a brown/grayish body coloration, often with a rusty nape patch. The 'cotton ball' looking tail gives this animal its name. Cottontails are sometimes confused with snowshoe hares, but cottontails are smaller overall, have smaller feet and ears, and don't change color in the winter months. These rabbits are typically 14-17 inches long and weigh between 2-4 lbs.

Habitat and Food: Cottontails are often found in heavy brush, forest patches with open areas and near the edges of thick swamps. Like the snowshoe hare, cottontails feed on succulent green vegetation in the summer and woody material in the winter.

AMERICAN WOODCOCK

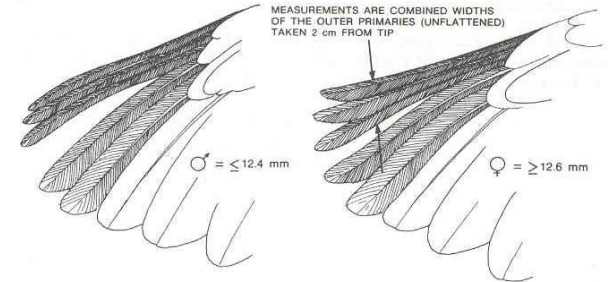
Philohela minor

The woodcock, like the grouse takes off explosively, often when underfoot. Unlike the grouse, however, the woodcock is a migratory bird and member of the sandpiper family. They have long bills relative to their bodies and large, dark eyes set high in the head that gives the bird a 360 degree field of view.



The sexes are extremely similar, however can be distinguished by two primary features: bill length and the width of the three outermost wing feathers. Bill length in the female is usually greater than 2 ¾ inches, while it is typically less than 2 ½ inches in the male.

The width of the three outer wing feathers (measured ~ ¾" from the tip) is usually ½" or more in the female and less than ½" in the male. With practice, it becomes apparent that the male has a much shorter bill and narrower wing feathers than the female. Woodcock typically weigh between 0.25 – 0.60 ounces with females being the heavier of the two sexes.














When flattened, the outer primary wing feathers of the male woodcock (left) will be slightly wider than the female (right).

Habitat and Food: The woodcock is found in young woodlands and shrubby fields with poor water drainage. Woodcock prefer moist, damp soils as it is easier for them to forage for earthworms, which make up approximately 80% of their diet. Fort Drum has an abundance of this type of habitat as well as woodcock on the installation. Concentrate hunting efforts in these moist alder thickets and locations where alder transitions into small diameter (young) aspen forests.



The bill of the male woodcock is shorter than the female.

Upland Game Habitats on Fort Drum

-  Subtraining Boundary
-  Aspen Dominant (1"- 5")
-  Aspen Dominant (6"- 11")
-  Aspen Dominant (12"- 17")
-  Conifer Dominant (1"- 5")
-  Conifer Dominant (6"- 11")
-  Conifer Dominant (12"- 17")
-  Oak Dominant (12"- 23")
-  Alder
-  Alder Co- Dominant
-  Pheasant Release Site

